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FROM U.S. MISSION IN ROME

STATE FOR IO/EDA, AF/W, NEA/ENA, OES/ENV; PASS EPA
USAID FOR DCHA, OFDA GOTTLIEB AND AFR LAVELLE
USDA FOR FAS HUGHES
GENEVA FOR NKYLOH/USAID
BRUSSELS FOR PLERNER

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SUBJECT: DESERT LOCUSTS: JULY 21 FAO DONORS' MEETING

REF: (A) 04 ROME 0722; (B) 04 ROME 3979; (C) 04 ROME 3581; (D) 05
ROME 0764; (E) 05 ROME 1451; AND (F) 05 ROME 2555

11. Summary: On July 21, an informal desert locusts donors' meeting was hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Chaired by FAO Director-General (DG) Jacques Diouf, the meeting was well represented by donors and affected countries. The meeting provided information on the 1) current situation in and forecast for the Sahel, Maghreb and Eastern Africa; 2) FAO assistance provided during the 2003-2005 upsurge; and 3) FAO assistance being provided for summer 2005 survey and control activities. Despite the late start in 2004, FAO believes it made up for lost time by playing a central coordinating role to pre-position equipment, pesticides, and other resources. It hosted or co-hosted a series of meetings and workshops to build local, national and regional capacity. Currently, financial resources are sufficient for even a worst-case scenario, which is most unlikely. Although small-scale infestations are in progress in Chad and Sudan, where the possibility of an outbreak looms, and limited locust activities are being reported in Niger and Mali, FAO believes that the threat of the desert locust situation in Northwest Africa will continue to diminish, becoming insignificant this year. Due to appropriate preparatory efforts, including extensive surveying, forecasting and control operations by Northwest African countries and pre-positioning of resources and provision of expertise to the Sahelian countries, FAO states that the outlook is quite good and it is well situated to handle this summer's potential control operations. To further support its preparatory efforts, FAO also stated it will begin consultations promptly on the external desert locust evaluation jointly being led by the United States, the Netherlands, and the World Bank. End Summary.

Funding Status

12. DG Diouf thanked FAO member countries for their contribution to the desert locust campaign, noting a rather late but positive response to the \$100 million appeal launched in August 2004. To date, FAO mobilized \$73.9 million from 27 donors, and \$6.3 million from its technical cooperation program (TCP) funds, for a total of \$80.2 million. Of this, \$66.5 million covered regional measures while \$13.7 million focused on national activities. All 66 projects operated by FAO were coordinated by FAO's Emergency Center for Locust Operations (ECLO).

13. As of July 21, 2005, \$45.5 million was spent on providing assistance (pesticides, aircraft hiring, spray and communication equipment, vehicles, technical expertise and training, etc.) to 18 affected countries, including Mauritania (\$14.84 million); Senegal (\$6.99); Niger (\$5.25); Mali (\$3.90); Morocco (\$3.39); and Chad (\$2.52). The remaining balance of \$34.7 million has been allocated as follows:

-- Most probable-case scenario in seven Sahelian countries: \$15.2 million (of which Mauritania \$4.04 million; Mali \$2.98; Chad \$2.47; Niger \$2.61; and Senegal \$2.82)
-- Maghreb: \$2 million
-- Worst-case scenario in the Sahel and outbreaks in other countries: \$17.5 million

FAO is working with donors to determine their ability to redirect excess funds to establish a Desert Locust Emergency Fund, which would mobilize early funding for a locust outbreak.

African Solidarity

14. Diouf noted that over and above contributions by donors was the significant coordinated activity by African nations, which fostered continental solidarity for the cause. Algeria, Morocco, Libya and Nigeria provided logistical support, equipment, experts, planes and pesticides to neighboring countries in the Sahel that were affected by the desert locust. Algeria in particular provided experts and logistics, and has recently sent

planes to treat pockets of desert locusts in Mali, Niger and possibly Chad. (Note: Assistance provided by the Northwest African countries to their neighbors in the Sahel accounted for tens of millions of dollars without which the locust situation could have gotten worse and caused more damage in the latter. End note)

FAO Preparatory Efforts

15. Diouf stated FAO played an important coordinating role, delivering 60 percent of the pesticides and providing 50 vehicles for the campaign. The combined efforts of FAO and other nations resulted in the treatment of an unprecedented 13 million hectares since October 2003, of which some three million were in the Sahel alone.

16. Diouf ran down the timeline of preparatory and extraordinary meetings, which FAO hosted either solely or jointly, including:

--Aerial Operations Workshop, Rome, Italy, February/March 2005, which resulted in contract flexibility for deploying aircraft to individual countries and regionally. For the summer campaign, FAO will deploy one helicopter each to Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger from July 23-27. In addition, stand-by contracts for fixed-wing spray aircraft are available should the need arise.

--Train-the-Trainers Workshop, Niamey, Niger, March 2005, at which 21 persons from 10 Sahelian countries and Djibouti were trained as national master trainers. Each carried out three training sessions in their own countries, resulting in the training of 600 crop protection staff regionally.

--Joint FAO/World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Regional Workshop on Meteorological Information for Locust Forecasting, Monitoring and Control, Niamey, Niger, April 2005, which was held to improve the availability of meteorological data for locust early warning activity.

--FAO/World Bank Contingency Planning Workshop, Bamako, Mali, April/May, at which seven Sahelian countries developed plans for best-case, most probable-case and worst-case locust infestation scenarios.

--FAO/World Bank Donors' Meeting, Bamako, Mali, May 2005, at which existing resources at that time (\$30 million) were

considered sufficient for the most probable-case scenario and close to sufficient for the worst-case scenario.

--Continued Dialogue with Donors, June/July 2005: Donor meetings were held in Dakar, Senegal, and Nouakchott, Mauritania, while weekly telephone conferences are held with the World Bank.

17. Diouf noted that FAO is now on top of the pesticides situation with its pesticides monitoring matrix. A stock of over 2 million liters is available in the Sahelian countries to cover more than a worst-case scenario. Repeatedly, Diouf stated that the coordination of pesticides delivery was harder than expected at the beginning due to numerous bilateral donations. If excess stocks cannot be used, or solutions for their long-term storage cannot be found, Diouf indicated that some bilateral donations may be returned.

18. FAO is working with donors to modify budget lines from 'pesticides purchases' to 'pesticides storage construction'. In addition, FAO is in the process of operationalizing pesticides drum crushers in various countries, and is deploying special teams to monitor the health of workers using pesticides. In addition, it is working on long-term pesticides storage solutions.

19. Diouf emphasized the importance of carrying out lessons learned evaluations with both donors and affected countries. He indicated that FAO agreed via formal communication to the Government of the Netherlands to participate in the desert locust evaluation [being spearheaded jointly by the Netherlands, the United States and the World Bank] beginning September/October 2005.

110. For the moment, Diouf concluded that existing resources are sufficient to cover even a worst-case scenario. ECLO is providing resources for a most probable-case scenario, ensuring that frontline countries such as Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad are well equipped and prepared. The desert locust component of FAO's Emergency Prevention System for Trans-boundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases (EMPRES), which establishes a rapid reaction capability and research facility, is assisting in this effort. FAO has two EMPRES programs, one in the central region and another in the western region. It hopes to include more Red Sea area countries in EMPRES by May 2006.

Locust Forecast

¶11. Diouf noted that currently traditional breeding grounds in Algeria, Mauritania and Morocco are nearly locust free. However, he cautioned that there are small infestations in Sudan and elsewhere and the desert locust breeding cycle is not yet over. FAO does not believe the situation will become critical. Extensive forecasting and deployment of resources will allow FAO to handle the situation effectively.

¶12. FAO's Locust Forecasting Officer stated that due to the unusually cold weather and as a result of aggressive control operations carried out in the summer and fall of 2004, only limited breeding occurred in spring 2005 in Northwest Africa. Consequently, there has been a dramatic decline in control

operations during the last six months in 2005 in the region and only 3,000 hectares were treated so far. Overall, the locust situation is relatively calm in southern Mauritania, northern Mali and Niger, and small-scale breeding has occurred in central Niger, eastern Chad and western Sudan. These were the result of the swarms that over-seasoned in mountains of Guinea and started moving eastwards in late April through Burkina and Mali and reached southern Niger and later on progressed to eastern Chad and western Sudan. Some reached eastern Sudan and northwestern Ethiopia and began laying eggs. FAO is concerned about the locust situation in eastern Chad and western Sudan where access is severely hampered due to recent flooding, poor infrastructure and the security situation. Chad and Sudan face a risky situation, which could develop into an outbreak. Later this month, some adult swarms may form in both Chad and Sudan and these swarms could move to the Red Sea coastal areas.

¶13. FAO estimates between 45,000 and 225,000 hectares may need to be treated in the most probable-case scenario as follows: between 10,000 and 50,000 hectares in Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, and between 5,000 and 25,000 hectares in Senegal. FAO is deploying a number of survey teams increasingly in the areas where rains will occur. So far, only limited ground control operations have been needed.

Sudan and Chad

¶14. In a side meeting with FAO's Locust Forecasting Officer, USUN/Rome learned that the current strategy is to wait and see which direction the locusts travel, for example, if they travel east to the Red Sea area (during the week of July 25, FAO staff will travel to Sudan to hold an EMPRES briefing with Red Sea area countries). FAO's Chad-based consultant believes he is getting reliable and objective information from the Government of Sudan's Plant Protection Department (PPD). The PPD was restructured and given a more centralized role recently, and has been in contact with FAO since the end of May when news broke on locust sightings in Darfur. A couple swarms crossed into Ethiopia while at least six swarms made it to Darfur where they laid eggs, which have hatched. The PPD has sent resources from Khartoum to government-controlled areas, but is having a hard time locating hatched eggs because of the lack of infrastructure. Various nongovernmental organizations (NGO) offered to provide helicopters for air surveys, while the United Nations Security Coordinator guaranteed the return of vehicles in non-government controlled areas if an international observer is on board. FAO is hesitant to accept this guarantee, as summer breeding areas are vast (equivalent to the western United States) and monitoring is difficult even if security is good.

¶15. The locust situation in Chad is also difficult to monitor due to washed out roads and security risks to staff, for example, two weeks ago, a brand new, radio-equipped FAO vehicle was taken by two armed men in broad daylight in the provincial capital of Abeche. However, small-scale breeding is occurring, with unconfirmed reports of eggs in central Chad. Chad has been on the periphery of an emergency over the last 18 months and donor resources may have to be reallocated toward most affected areas. Due to Chad's limited supply of vehicles, FAO is supplementing control operations with fixed-wing aircraft for aerial activities

commencing the week of August 4.

Donors and Affected Countries, including Niger, Respond

¶16. Sudan stated it was in an excellent situation during last year's upsurge, thanks to Saudi Arabia and FAO coordination, and stressed the importance of being prepared in time for an outbreak this year, especially in Darfur.

¶17. France stressed the importance of providing information back to donors, noting it had only received two ill-prepared reports from FAO on its contributions; and asked for more information on the involvement of national services. Due to contractual obligations, France stated that any leftover amounts cannot be redirected to the emergency fund.

¶18. Niger spoke twice, once on desert locusts and once on the current humanitarian emergency. Niger thanked donors and FAO for the past and current efforts to combat locusts, noting that teams were in the field to monitor harvest and that Niger has a good supply of pesticides. Niger asked FAO and donors to think about the in-between seasons and develop programs on crops with river populations in mind. On the humanitarian emergency, Niger stated that more than three million people were at risk for famine and that funding for the international appeal has not been very forthcoming. [Comment. In side meetings with FAO staff, USUN/Rome learned that UN Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland sent a letter to FAO DG Diouf during the week of July 11, requesting that leftover desert locust funds be redirected to the crisis in Niger. Diouf responded that certain donors are precluded from redirecting funds. For example, the European Commission informed FAO that funds for Niger cannot come from the excess locusts funds, as the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) has funds set aside for Niger. Thus far, only Sweden has given \$650,000 to FAO's appeal for Niger, while FAO contributed \$400,000 from its TCP funds. End Comment.]

¶19. Mauritania thanked Diouf for personally visiting last year to get a first hand view of the situation; and appealed for a review and build-up of spare parts for desert locust equipment.

¶20. The Netherlands stressed the urgency of the external desert locust evaluation, which would lead to better preparedness on the part of FAO, and expressed hope for a September start date, with final recommendations issued by December. It called for FAO's utmost cooperation. As a participating member of the evaluation, the United States echoed these comments. Diouf replied that FAO would not wait until September but would begin consultations immediately with interested parties.

¶21. Saudi Arabia thanked FAO for the early warning last year on Sudan, which permitted it to take the necessary precautions in concert with the Sudanese authorities; and asked for further consultations with donors on the proposed emergency fund.

¶22. Mali noted that its plant protection center was restructured to gear up for future desert locust scourges; emphasized the need for an emergency fund; and expressed support for improving functionality of FAO through an evaluation.

¶23. Yemen stated that although it was not included in the 2004 emergency, it is subjected annually to desert locust, and this year's rainfall activity indicates locust activity in Yemen may be on the rise. It supported an external evaluation.

¶24. Japan noted the difficulty it faced to contribute \$3 million to FAO's desert locust campaign because of sensitivities related to pesticides; stated there was a gap between theory and reality in terms of FAO effectiveness during the campaign; and echoed Mali's concerns on improving FAO's effectiveness, either through the evaluation or after.

¶24. Algeria noted that the responsibility to fight desert locusts rests first and foremost with each affected state.

¶25. Eritrea stated that so far, no desert locust control had been made except for management control and requested more information on FAO's biological/chemical research.

¶25. Minimize considered.

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